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Characteristics of European Family and Household Systems

*Richard Wall**

Abstract: This article establishes that there was considerable diversity in the size and composition of the kin group within the household that is not captured by the conventional classification of family systems according to the relative proportions of simple and complex household forms. Three case studies are presented from England, Corsica and Hungary. English households fulfilled an important welfare role in that they incorporated relatives and non-relatives who were not members of core families (couples or parent(s) and unmarried child(ren)). The societies of Corsica and Hungary provided a greater proportion of their populations with membership of a core family.

Most accounts of the nature of family and household patterns in the past rely heavily, and sometimes exclusively, on the identification of household types in terms of their kinship structure. The basic classification distinguishes the households of solitaires, households lacking a conjugal family unit, simple family households, comprising married couples living alone and married couples and lone parents with their unmarried children, and more complex residence groups (for details of the classifications, see Laslett and Wall 1972, which modifies an earlier classification of Louis Henry). In a further simplification many comparisons of household structures across Europe have concentrated on just two of these household types, the proportion of simple family households relative to the number of complex households, despite Laslett's insistence that this was only one way of recording household forms. The aim of this chapter is to return to this issue by examining the composition of households from a number of different perspectives, taking note both of the extent of the differences and some similarities among communities located in different parts of Europe.

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The discussion will proceed from a consideration of whether the family system featured simple or complex households to an examination under different family systems of the frequency with which relatives take on responsibility for the socially disadvantaged members of society such as unmarried adults, the widowed, and the elderly. Typically this has been viewed as a particular problem of the simple family regimes of north-west Europe, with alternative channels of support often coming from outside the household through state provision for the poor, or private charity (Laslett 1988; Wall 1992). However, the fate of such persons under more complex family systems is not necessarily assured by the number of adults present. All households, to ensure continued viability, aim to balance workers with consumers and to withstand the various external pressures which could be applied in various cases by landowner, serf-owner, or the village community. In other words, the focus of the discussion will shift from a consideration of household structure to an analysis of one of the chief functions of a household: its role as a welfare agency. It is appropriate to begin, however, with a review of the concepts of family and marriage systems which have been developed to describe, and to some extent, explain the variety of family systems to be found in Europe. Foremost amongst such conceptualisations is John Hajnal's delineation of the western European marriage patterns (Hajnal 1965).

The western European marriage pattern and the north-west European household formation system

John Hajnal's description of the marriage patterns of western Europe, even when not accepted in all its detail, has served as a natural starting point for all further work (Hajnal 1965, and for some criticisms see Alter 1991). The determining characteristics of this marriage pattern, as first formulated by Hajnal, were a late age at first marriage, by both sexes, and (again for both sexes) a high proportion never marrying. Additional elements of the pattern have been suggested subsequently. These features include the movement of adolescents and young adults from the parental household into the household of an employer, as (non-related) servants, the formation, on marriage, of households which were distinct from those of any surviving parents, minimal age differences between husband and wife, a late mean age at child-bearing, the rarity with which households functioned as work groups, and the existence within society of sources of welfare to supplement, if not to replace the efforts of families (Laslett 1977; Hajnal 1983; Laslett 1983). Underpinning the marriage pattern was the drive by all sectors of society for economic self-sufficiency, postponing marriage and the establishment of an independent household until either a suitable farm became available, sufficient savings could be accumulated, or the relevant experience could be gained on the job market.

This account of the western European marriage pattern has now been challenged from a number of quarters. One concern has been its precise sphere of influence. Hajnal's initial view was that this marriage pattern prevailed over all of Europe west of a line from St Petersburg to Trieste. However, when he came in 1983 to delineate the extent of the north-west European simple household system of a late age at first marriage, the formation of a new household on marriage, and a high proportion of servants in the population, he set a social structural frontier decisively westwards of the St Petersburg-Trieste line, by including within north-west Europe only Scandinavia (but not Finland), the British Isles, the Low Countries, the German-speaking areas, and northern France (Hajnal 1983: 66, 69). In the same year Peter Laslett stressed the degree of variation in European family patterns in the past, by listing the different aspects of domestic group organisation in four regions of Europe. Although he awarded these regions the geographical labels of west, west-central or middle, mediterranean, and east, the element of variability was emphasised by his explicit recognition that given Europe's rich demographic and cultural diversity, the boundaries between regions were likely to be fluid. Characteristics associated with one region might, he argued, be discovered in other parts of Europe and some European populations might exhibit elements of more than one of the family systems (Laslett 1983: 526-30).

Boundaries between "systems" might also shift over time. During the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the family system of Hungary evolved from the simple family household system of north-west Europe towards more complex structures in the face of land-scarcity in one part of the country and a labour-scarcity in another (Andorka and Farago 1983: 304). In the latter part of the 19th century, as the economy of Corsica deteriorated, extended and multiple family households came to predominate in place of less complex households (Marchini 1996). Other societies have moved in the reverse direction. For example, in the south-west of Finland simple family households increased at the expense of complex households during the late 18th and 19th centuries in response to legal reforms which permitted the division of farms and the formation of households by the landless. After 1850 the trend towards more simple household forms was reinforced by innovations in methods of fishing which reduced the amount of capital and labour required (Moring 1994, and for a summary in English, Moring 1993). Simple family households also replaced complex family households in some parts of Sweden during the eighteenth century (Lundh 1995).

A second challenge both to Hajnal and Laslett's conceptualisation of marriage and family patterns has involved a search for inconsistencies within the defining characteristics of a particular family system, for example, for signs of the presence of a late age at first marriage in conjunction with low proportions remaining unmarried and a high proportion of complex households, or, alternatively, of an early age at first marriage co-existing with a

preponderance of simple family households. Such evidence has been duly produced, more particularly from Italy (Benigno 1989; Kertzer and Hogan 1991), making it difficult to maintain that there was just one Mediterranean family pattern. It is clear that the variability is too great to be accommodated within one family system, even with a generous allowance for the fluidity of boundaries between systems and the presence in combination of marriage and household patterns incompatible with the essential characteristics of the family system of which they were supposedly part, as argued by Laslett in 1983.

An even more fundamental attack on the premises of the conceptualisation of the western European marriage pattern has been mounted by Dan Scott Smith. According to Smith, two of its key characteristics, a late age at first marriage, and a high rate of permanent celibacy, were not intrinsic elements of the family system but the product of external constraints. Whenever there was an open frontier, as in north America, age at marriage and the proportions of never-married fell below the levels associated with a north-west European household pattern, leaving only the establishment of a new household on marriage as the defining characteristic of the system (Smith 1993). Yet it is possible to show that even this principle might be violated at times, when for example economic circumstances in the form of a shortage of housing at a suitable price, or the need for young married women to seek employment outside the home, enforced the co-residence of more distant relatives than the immediate nuclear family of parents and unmarried children (Anderson 1971:142; Wall 1983:506). This argument, as does that of Smith, effectively assumes that it is not the outcome, for example whether people marry early or late, which is critical in terms of defining the characteristics of a family system, but the cultural values which underlie the behavioural patterns. However, there is very little evidence which can indicate the preferences of inhabitants for one particular type of household over another. The historian is therefore forced to rely on the records left by their actions. Proverbs and sayings used by ethnographers to interpret marriage patterns and attitudes towards the elderly in the past (see for example Segalen 1983 and Gaunt 1983) would appear to make no reference to residence patterns, never stipulating, for example, that the widowed elderly should live with their children. By contrast, the obligations laid upon children to support their parents in cash and kind within the limits permitted by their other commitments were embodied into systems of community support such as the English poor law.

Another approach is to consider economic and cultural determinants of behaviour as so inherently linked that it becomes pointless to try and disentangle them. Cultural preferences can, for example, be seen as shifting in line with changing economic realities. Alternatively, economic forces may be viewed as reshaping cultural preferences, with the bulk of the population of north-west Europe, for example, marrying late, when that was the best option, and marrying somewhat earlier when the opportunity arose. Indeed, preferences

for the formation of a new household on marriage may in fact have been reinforced in situations when such opportunities were denied to a large proportion of the population because of major economic dislocations. For example, the housing shortage following the two world wars which increased the frequency of co-residence of married children with their parents (Wall 1991) may have intensified the desire for generational independence by a generation who saw themselves losing out on opportunities which had been enjoyed by many members of the parental generation. In the event of a prolonged crisis, however, particularly where the crisis endured for several generations, the new behavioural pattern would become normalized as the choice of any other form of residence pattern would be clearly deemed impractical. For example, couples in certain industrial areas in the nineteenth century who delayed the establishment of a new household until after the birth of their first or second child so that the grandmother could assist with child-care while the mother continued working outside the home (Anderson 1971) may have viewed co-residence with the parents as perfectly acceptable and not simply as something forced on them by circumstances. Once in place, such norms would also delay any tendency to establish new households on marriage, even when economic circumstances changed.

The thrust of much of the recent theorizing about the forces underpinning the western European marriage pattern and the north-west European household system has been to stress the cultural determinants at the expense of the economic. Behavioural norms may have both precluded the formation of certain types of household while they encouraged the establishment of others. The nature of these norms, however, remains very much open to debate. Whereas Hajnal was content simply to describe the north-west European household formation system as he considered it operated during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Hajnal 1983), Mitterauer has argued that its characteristic shape and sphere of influence was determined in the early Middle Ages under the influence of the beliefs and administrative practices of the Catholic Church, coupled with the tighter control over access to land which followed a deteriorating land-labour ratio (Mitterauer 1994). For Mitterauer, therefore, it was the institutional structure (which was in turn embedded in a number of cultural values) plus specific economic forces which "created" the north-west European household system, even though it may have been maintained thereafter by the "cultural" preferences of various European populations. Jasna Capo has argued in a similar vein in order to explain the great variation in household and family forms in just one micro-region in north-eastern Croatia. The key determinants of these patterns, according to Capo, were the timing of the resettlement after the defeat of the Ottomans, the amount of land made available, and the family patterns of the settlers at the time of their migration. These factors in combination established the preferences for the formation of particular types of household, preferences

which continued to be exercised by later generations except when adverse economic circumstances temporarily forced the adoption of alternative living arrangements (Capo 1996).

By contrast, Dan Scott Smith and Michel Verdón envisage a universal preference for small and simple households. Households, they argue, would always assume this form but for the existence of a variety of constraints which prevent such preferences being implemented. Smith, for example, has argued that it is an intrinsic human characteristic to prefer to reside in as small a group as is necessary to ensure the continuity of the species. In other words, his argument is that any larger residential group than a simple family household must be the product of external constraints on household formation, or of behavioural norms which over-ride the "natural" preference for simple family households. This argument is difficult to disprove, but it is not necessarily the case that residence in a simple family household is a better guarantee of species-survival than residence in more complex households. A less biological explanation is advanced by Verdón, who assumes a constant preference on the part of populations in the past for residential independence once they reach adulthood, a preference which they only fail to exercise due to a variety of economic and legal constraints (Verdón 1996).

The implication of the work of both Smith and Verdón is that what requires investigation is not the preferences for a particular family system but the constraints, economic, demographic, and cultural, which prevent the universal cultural preference for small and simple households being exercised, or conversely, the economic, demographic, and cultural opportunities which enable the instinctive wishes of the population to be realised. Examples of constraints would include the need for young married women to seek employment outside the parental home in mid-nineteenth century Lancashire, which necessitated co-residence with the children's grandmother (Anderson 1971); the inability of married offspring to secure adequate housing or employment, as documented by Schlumbohm in his account of the situation of the landless in Belm in Germany in the mid-nineteenth century (Schlumbohm 1996); and the need to buy the compliance and labour of the heir by permitting his marriage prior to his father's retirement in economically depressed areas operating a stem-family system (Verdón 1996). Opportunities include not only the possession of sufficient resources to form a household of the desired type, but the availability of alternative employment, even at a lower social level than that of the parents (for example involving the social descent from propertied peasant to small-holder or day-labourer, as reported by Schlumbohm, 1996) or by migration out of the community of all non-heirs.

Residence patterns in nuclear and more complex household regimes: a three-community study

To pursue further the question of the variability of household forms and their success or otherwise in providing for members of the community without close family members or whose own families were unable to support them, three populations will be examined in detail. The first is from England, where simple family households predominated, the second from Corsica, where households were also small but there was evidence that siblings, both married and unmarried, frequently co-resided (Dupâquier and Jardin 1972), and the third from Hungary, where many villages had large proportions of multi-generational households. For the English example we have selected the 1790 enumeration of Corfe Castle in the county of Dorset. The parish included both the small town of Corfe and the surrounding rural area. Male employments were diverse, including a range of crafts and small trades and services, farming and labouring, clay-cutting, and fishing. Female employments were much more restricted and poorly remunerated, with the vast majority of women earning no more than one-fifth of the most poorly-paid man (Wall 1994). The Corsican population selected is that of Ghisony, which was enumerated in 1770, following the acquisition of Corsica by France. The economy of Ghisony was pastoral. This is clearly indicated in the census of 1770, which counted the number of livestock in the possession of each household. From Hungary we have selected the village of Kblked. The enumeration dates from 1816, the population was Hungarian Calvinist, and the economy pastoral.

Comparison of the household patterns using the standard Hammel-Laslett classification scheme reveals the expected pattern (see Table 1) in that extended and multiple family households occurred much more frequently in Ghisony and Kölked than in Corfe Castle. In Corfe only 4 percent of all households contained two related families (and were therefore identified as multiple-family households), whereas in Ghisony more than one in ten and in Kölked almost four in ten households were of the multiple-family type. The Corsican and Hungarian villages also had many more extended family households, that is, households of a married couple or a lone parent with a child, which also contained a relative who was not part of a core-family group. Yet close examination of Table 1 indicates that there are other differences between the three populations. Fourteen percent of all the households in Corfe Castle, for example, consisted of solitaires, whereas there are only 2 percent of such households in Ghisony in Corsica, and none at all in Kölked in Hungary. Many of these solitary householders in Corfe Castle were supported to a large extent by payments from the Poor Law authorities and might not have existed without such support.

Lateral extensions to the household already commented upon by Dupâquier and Jadin in their study of Corsican households give a special character to the

Table 1: Households by kinship structure

Categories	Corfe Castle, England, 1790	Ghisony, Corsica, 1770	Kolked, Hungary, 1816
	%	%	%
1. Solitaries			
a) widowed	7	1	0
b) single	7	0	0
Subtotal	14	2	0
2. No family households			
a) co-resident siblings	1	4	0
b) other co-resident relatives	0	0	0
c) unrelated persons	0	0	0
Subtotal	2	4	0
3. Simple family households			
a) married couples alone	10	6	4
b) married couples with children	52	42	38
c) widowers with children	5	10	2
d) widows with children	4	6	4
Subtotal	72	65	47
4. Extended family households			
a) extended upwards	2	7	13
b) extended downwards	4	2	1
c) extended laterally	1	7	1
d) combinations	2	1	0
Subtotal	9	17	14
5. Multiple family households			
a) secondary units up	0	3	2
b) secondary units down	4	8	26
c) secondary units laterally	0	0	4
d) frèrèches	0	1	3
e) combinations	0	0	4
Subtotal	4	13	39
6. Indeterminate			
N	240	188	111

no-family households and the extended family households in Ghisony (Dupâquier and Jadin 1972). It is also evident that in Ghisony, simple family households headed by widowers exceeded considerably the number headed by widows, whereas the reverse applied in Kôlked while in Corfe Castle the numbers were evenly balanced. The relative level of male and female mortality in adulthood and differential departure rates of children from the parental home may explain why relatively more simple family households were headed by widowers in Ghisony. That there are so few households of this type in Kôlked is probably due to the incorporation of widowers (and indeed some widows) into the category of extended and multiple-family households. In the multiple family households, the categorization scheme also makes it possible to determine whether headship is retained in the parental generation. This was a striking feature of the household structure of Kôlked, as it was in the few multiple-family households present in Corfe Castle in 1790. However, in Ghisony there was a relatively high proportion of cases where headship had been transferred to the child generation: that is, there were relatively more multiple family households where the son and not the father was the head of the household.

This survey of the structure of the household as presented in Table 1 has made very evident that there is much more variation in household form between our three populations than is captured by a simple dichotomy between the presence of complex and simple family households. This point is reinforced if we now move on to consider the variation across the life-span in the relationships of household members. For this purpose we have used a classification scheme which allocates individuals according to whether they are or are not members of a core-family group, defined so as to include unmarried children resident with at least one parent, married couples, and lone parents. Persons who are not members of families are classified in three ways, according to whether they lived with relatives, with non-relatives only, or alone. In this classification it should be emphasised that the category of relative has been defined not by a specific relationship to the household head, but by the existence of a relationship with other members of the household in the absence of the closer family ties of parent-unmarried child and married couple. The classification therefore measures in a different way from that presented in Table 1 the frequency of wider kin ties within the household: the focus is on the individual and not the household, and relatives identified not by their relationship to the head of the household but by their relationship with any household member in the absence of closer family ties.

Figure 1 presents the pattern of relationships within the household for the male population of the three villages. The same information is given for the female populations in Figure 2. The distinctive features of the relationship patterns for males in Corfe Castle were the gradual departure of children from the parental home (cf Wall 1978), the prevalence of residence with

Figure 1: Relationships in the household Corfe Castle 1790: Males

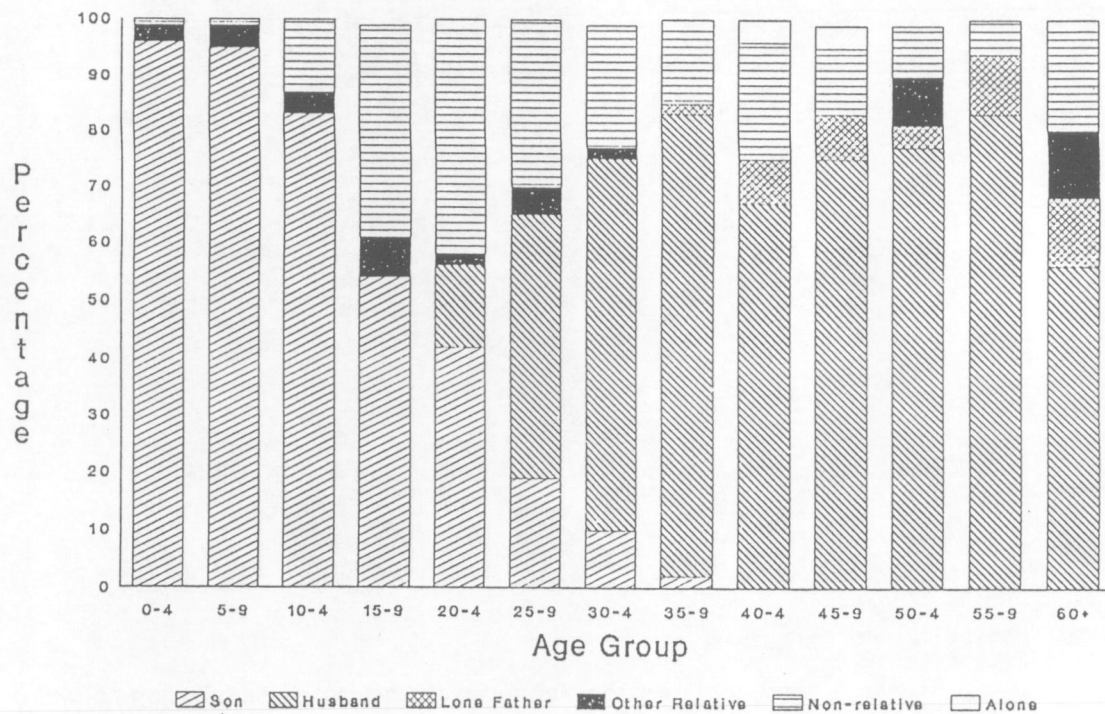


Figure 1: Relationships in the household Ghisony, Corsica 1770: Males

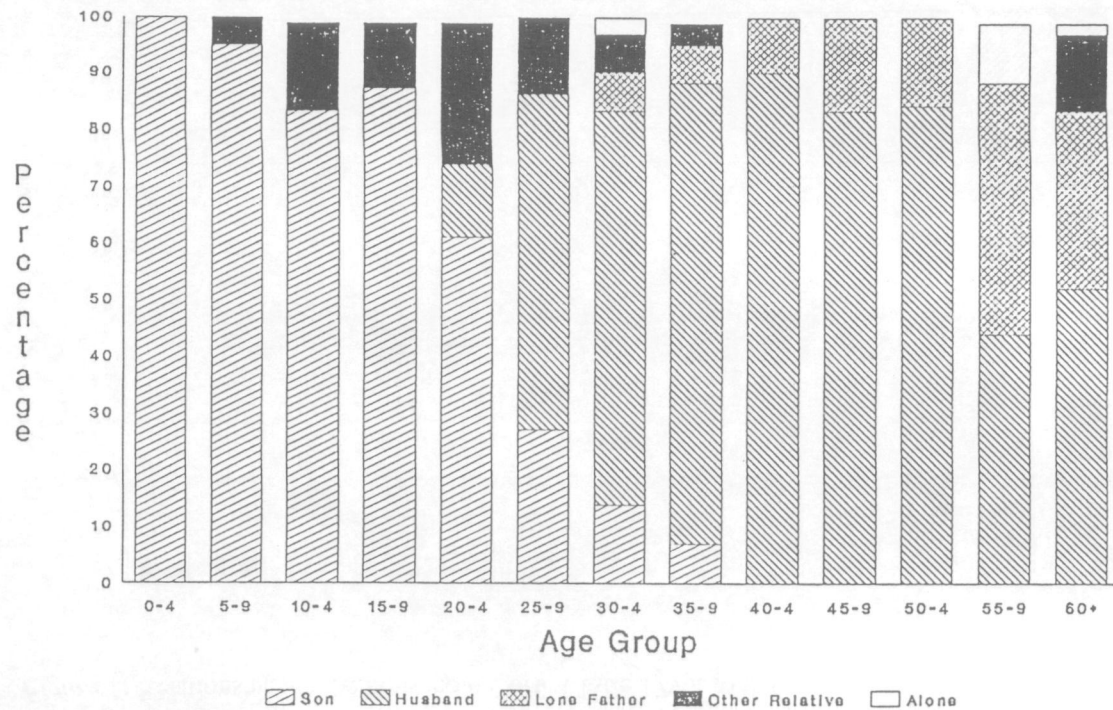


Figure 1: Relationships in the household Kőlked, Hungary 1816: Males

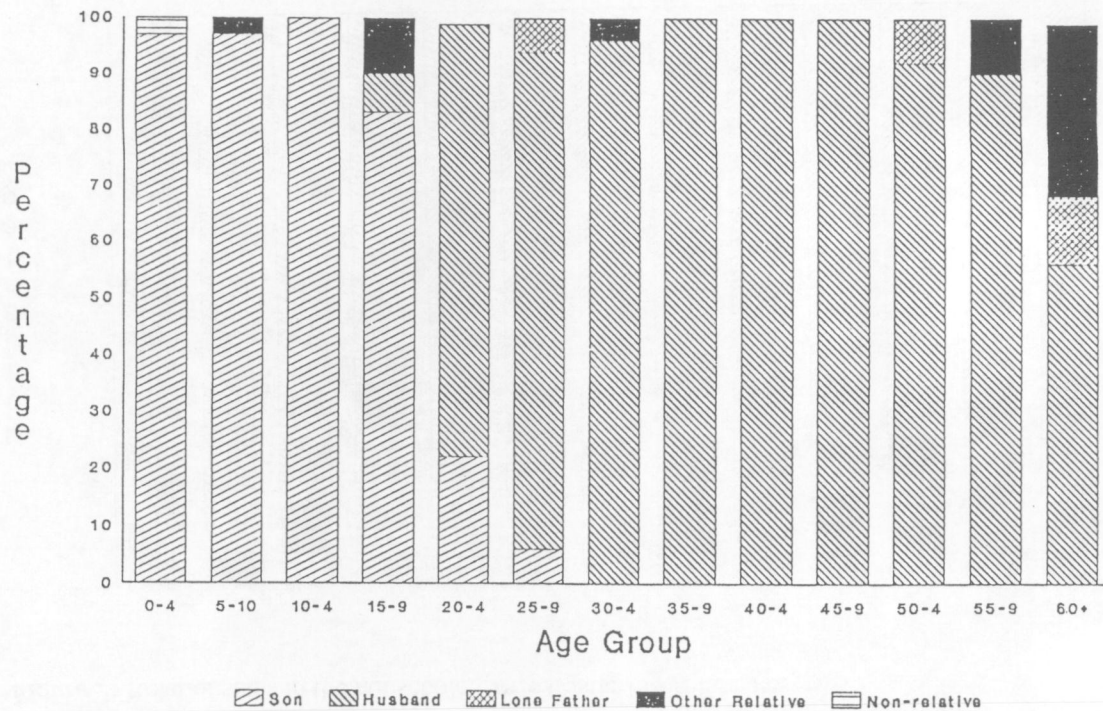


Figure 2: Relationships in the household Corfe Castle 1790: Females

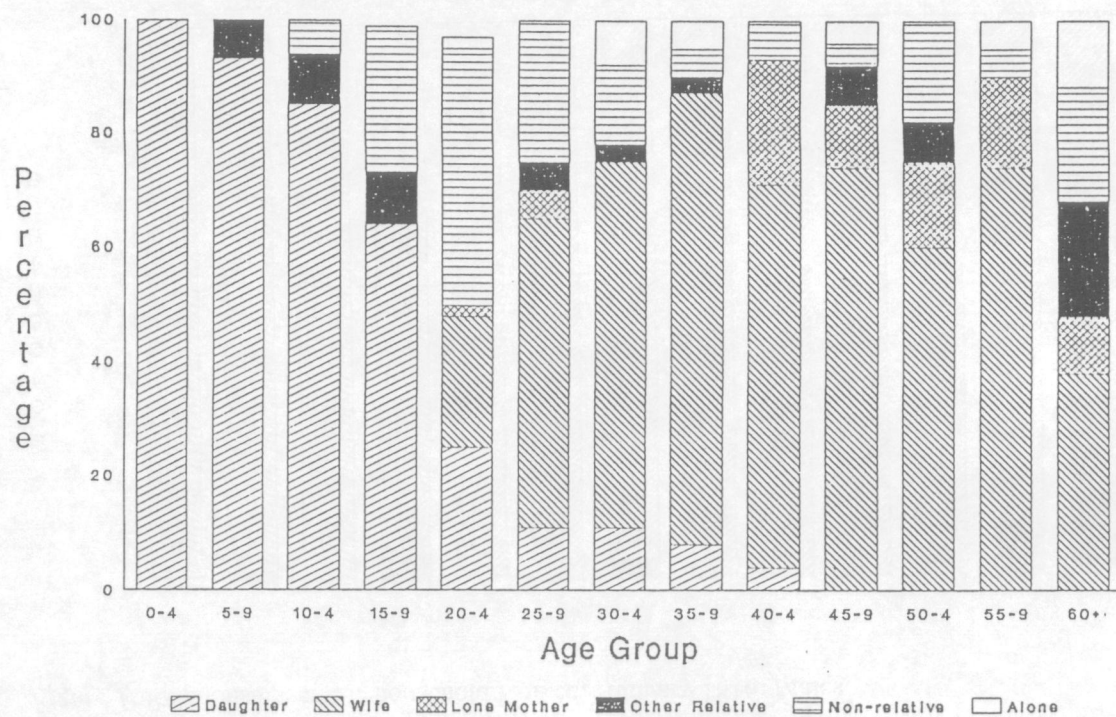


Figure 2: Relationships in the household Ghisony, Corsica 1770: Females

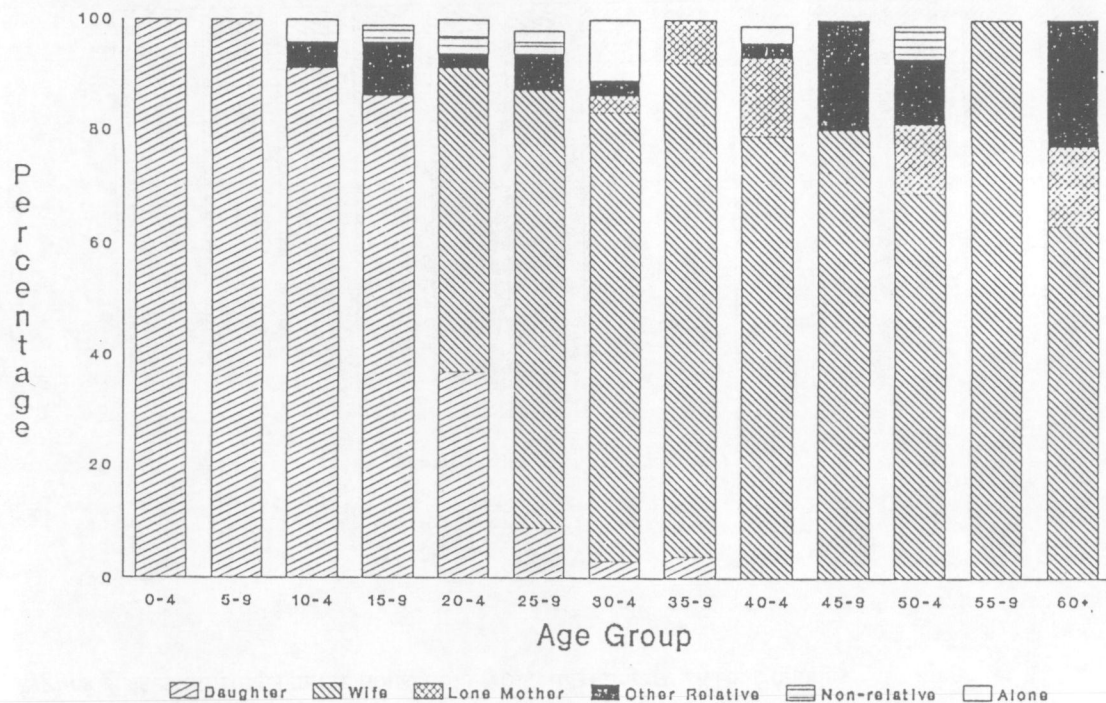
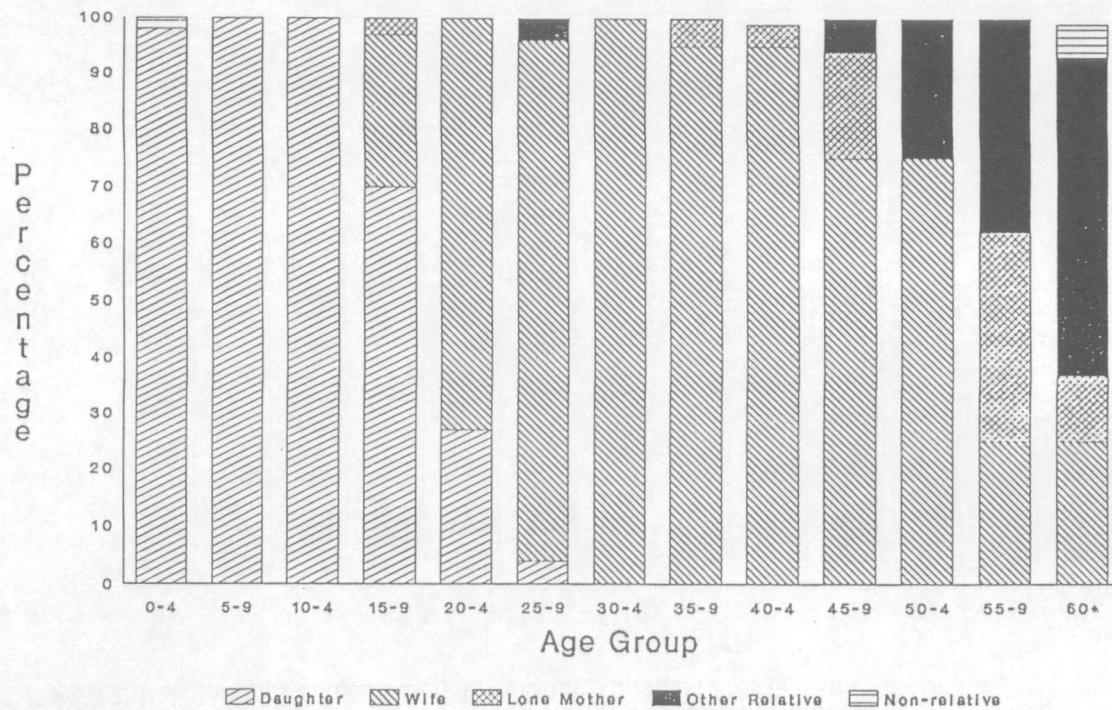


Figure 2: Relationships in the household Kőlked, Hungary 1816: Females



non-relatives during the teenage years and early adulthood, and again in old age, and the rarity of living alone at any age. Also uncommon was co-residence with relatives in the absence of other close family ties, although there were some males in most age-groups in such a role. In Ghisony the change of status from son to husband was concentrated into a much shorter section of the life-cycle (principally between 20 and 29), and co-residence with relatives in the absence of other family ties occurred after the age of ten and on into early adulthood. There was also a much greater frequency than in Corfe Castle of men over 50 living as lone fathers with unmarried children. The most marked difference, however, was the almost total absence from Ghisony of co-residence with non-relatives. Residence patterns in Ghisony were clearly family-centred.

Kölked also emerges as a family-based society. It was again very rare to live only with non-relatives. In view of the complexity of the household structures (see Table 1) this is scarcely surprising. What, however, is remarkable, given the complexity of the household forms in Kölked, is the rarity outside old age with which men co-resided with relatives in the absence of parent-child or couple relationships. However, in contrast to Ghisony and Corfe Castle, there were also very few lone fathers. For males in Kölked, just two relationships dominated: son and husband, with the majority of men moving from one role to the other when in their early twenties, the move occupying an even shorter section of the life-cycle than in Ghisony.

Many of the features of male residence patterns are shared by the female population: co-residence with non-relatives only as a prominent feature of residence patterns in Corfe Castle but its virtual absence elsewhere, and the general rarity of living alone in all three populations (see Figure 2). There were, however, some differences. For example, whereas there were very few household roles for men in Kölked other than son or father, there were among the women a considerable number of lone mothers with unmarried children as well as, at older ages, considerable numbers of other relatives. In Corfe Castle too there were relatively more lone mothers than lone fathers, whereas in Ghisony in Corsica more men than women were in the position of being a lone parent. It is also possible to identify differences between the populations in marriage ages. Both men and women married at a later age in Corfe Castle than in Ghisony or Kölked, and in Corfe Castle there was also less of an age gap between husband and wife.

The role of relatives within the household

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to an assessment of the role played by relatives within the household. Relatives can have a variety of functions within the household: economic, service, dependent, or a mixture of all three (Wall 1983; Wall 1986). Careful examination of the characteristics of the host household in relation to the age, marital status, gender, and family status of the relative does in a number of cases enable one to deduce which role was dominant. For example, in English populations in the past, a majority of relatives were women, suggesting that service and dependency roles were the most important, whereas in rural villages in West Flanders in the early nineteenth century, the majority of the relatives were male (Wall 1991). In some populations the number and type of relatives present within a household reflects the structural characteristics of the family system, with more relatives likely to be married in populations of eastern Europe, where complex households were much more in evidence than in north-west Europe.

This is confirmed by a consideration in Table 2 of the types of relative present in the populations of Corfe Castle, Ghisony, and K lked. For the purposes of this analysis relatives have been classified into certain categories using the information on relationship to household head, marital status, and their family situation. The object is to distinguish relatives, who might well need the support of other household members, from other relatives whose presence within the household followed from the way in which household headship was to be transferred from the current incumbent to a successor. The first category would encompass children whose parents were not co-residing with them, and widowed persons under the age of 60 with or without children. The latter group of relatives, present within the household system due to its inherent characteristics, would include married sons, their spouses and children, and in some societies (and this is particularly important in the case of the Corsican population), married siblings. Of course not all relatives can be so readily placed in one system or the other. In some societies married sons may be in temporary need and take shelter within the parental home. Elderly persons co-residing with their children may include both retired household heads who had passed the headship of their household to their heir, and others had been received into the household of a child after being widowed, or in old age. A short-term return to the parental home or to the dwelling of a relative is also possible and cannot be identified on the basis of cross-sectional census data. Nevertheless the classification does serve to identify the main elements of co-residence patterns as far as they involved the sharing of a household with persons related to the household head but not forming part of his own nuclear family.

In Corfe Castle there is evidence of a variety of relationship types: children resident with their parents, parentless children, other never-married persons,

Table 2: Characteristics of the kin group within the household

Kin type¹	Corfe Castle, England, 1790	Ghisony, Corsica, 1770	Kolked, Hungary, 1816
Male relatives	%	%	%
Children with parents	27	12	40
Parentless children	27	0	0
Other never-married persons	21	49	2
Widower (aged <60) and child	0	1	1
Widower (aged <60) childless	0	0	0
Elderly (aged 60+)	9	7	0
Son-in-law	6	0	1
Married son	9	26	48
Married brother	0	4	4
Married brother-in-law	0	0	1
Other	0	0	3
N	33 = 100%	72 = 100%	119 = 100%
Female relatives	%	%	%
Children with parents	18	16	36
Parentless children	20	0	0
Other never-married persons	29	34	1
Widow (aged <60) and child	4	2	2
Widow (aged <60) childless	0	3	2
Elderly (aged 60+)	16	11	3
Daughter-in-law	9	30	47
Married daughter	4	0	2
Married sister	0	0	1
Married sister-in-law	0	5	4
Other	0	0	3
N	45 = 100%	64 = 100%	121 = 100%

Note: 1. Derived from information on age, marital status, relationship to the household and relationship to other persons in the household.

and, for women in particular, the elderly. In Ghisony, on the other hand, the principal types of relative identified comprise unmarried persons (principally siblings of the household head), married sons and their partners together with

their offspring, and a number of elderly women. In the third population, Kölked, the types of relative were even more restricted, to sons and daughters-in-law and their offspring. In other words, the nuclear family regime of England, as represented by Corfe Castle, actually had a wider range of kin-types within its households than were to be found in selected communities from other parts of Europe where more complex household regimes predominated. In England one can see the household functioning as a welfare agency, taking in a wide variety of persons who would find it difficult to live on their own, whereas in the other two populations the kin group was much less diverse and primarily associated with the process of the transfer of the headship of the household.

The characteristics of the household which hosted these relatives also differed (see Table 3). This is only to be expected as relatives were more likely to be present during certain phases of the household's history than at others. For example, in a more complex household system, where men retained the headship of the household through to their death, multiple family households were most likely when the head of the household had achieved the age of sixty. Conversely, where complex households also predominated but male heads retired prior to their death but continued to reside with their sons, complex households were particularly likely when heads of household were in their twenties or thirties. Yet even when households were predominately small and simple in terms of composition, as in England, the expectation still remains that relatives will be more likely to be present at certain points in the history of the household than at other times, as the needs of the host-household change as it develops. For example, male household heads who had lost their spouse or who had never married might welcome into their household a female relative able to keep house, whether or not they were in a position to hire servants. Women who headed households might also welcome the companionship of a close relative whose own household had been broken due to death or separation from their spouse. Economic considerations could be particularly important in this connection, where the women were supported by income from property, annuities, ran a small business, or shared an occupation (Wall 1983). Using the classification set out in Table 3 it is possible to measure the frequency of such arrangements.

In Corfe Castle by contrast with the other two populations there was a much higher concentration of relatives in households where the household head was without children of his/her own. This may indicate no more than that these households had more residential space at their disposal, or it may alternatively indicate that some at least of the relatives fulfilled the role which might have been played by children in other circumstances. In Ghisony and Kölked relatives were more likely to reside in households with a married head, reflecting the role relatives played in the transference of the headship of the household. We may also infer a service role for female kin in Corfe Castle, who

Table 3: Distribution of male and female relatives according to sex, age, marital status and family circumstances of household head.

Household head ¹	Male relativeshead			Female relatives		
	Corfe	Ghisony	Kolked	Corfe	Ghisony	Kolked
	1790	1770	1816	1790	1770	1816
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male age <60	33	58	39	40	56	50
Male age 60+	36	36	33	22	41	30
Female	30	6	28	38	3	20
Subtotal	100	100	100	100	100	100
Childless ²	76	44	48	78	52	54
With children ³	24	56	52	22	48	46
Subtotal	100	100	100	100	100	100
Married	48	64	55	33	69	68
Non-married	52	36	44	67	31	31
Subtotal	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total	33	72	119	45	64	121

Notes: 1. A household head may fall into more than one category, e.g. a household may be headed by a male under the age of 60 who is childless and non-married.

2. Includes households where married offspring were present but there were no unmarried children of the head.

3. In addition to any married offspring.

occurred more frequently than male kin in the households of the non-married. This was not the case in Ghisony or Kolked. There are also signs of congregation of female relatives in households with a female head, both in Corfe Castle and in Kolked. The effect, however, is not particularly strong, at least judged from the residence patterns of women in Bruges in the early 19th century (Wall 1983).

Conclusion

This evidence, sketchy though it is, on the role of relatives within the household, indicates that there is considerable diversity of family systems which is not captured by the conventional classification of family systems according to the proportion of simple or more complex household forms. The societies of Ghisony and K lked seem to have provided a greater proportion of their populations with membership of a core family through spousal or parent-unmarried child relationships. In Corfe Castle, on the other hand, where nuclear family households predominated, persons who for one reason or another were not members of core families were attached to households of their relatives, and in some cases incorporated into the households of non-relatives.

The English households were the more elastic, and we can see these households fulfilling an important welfare role. Unfortunately, the sources do not reveal how well these relatives were integrated into the households which received them. Personal relationships may often have been tense, and security of continued residence in the household problematic. From this point of view the more complex household systems of the other populations examined, from Corsica and from Hungary, appear to provide a better measure of security. There would appear to be a greater likelihood of the household continuing, and there was a much greater chance of individuals having available very close family members, spouse, unmarried and married children in case of need. Yet it is a little surprising that there were so few non-core family members in Ghisony and K lked. The family seems almost too successful in looking after its own. Perhaps there were some individuals who could not be absorbed into the households of relatives and had to migrate outside the community altogether, or even disappear into a substratum of the population which the censuses did not record. Following the arguments of Smith and Verdon, it could be argued that constraints on independent household formation were that much more severe in Ghisony and K lked than in Corfe Castle. Nevertheless, there were many adults in Corfe Castle, particularly in early adulthood, who had not yet formed their own households. Our sources do not indicate what living arrangements the inhabitants of Corfe Castle, Ghisony, or K lked might actually have preferred, had they been given the option, but it seems realistic to suppose that their preferences were conditioned by the options available: the desire to continue the family-based societies of Ghisony and K lked and the more service-based use of kin-ties in the society of Corfe Castle.

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